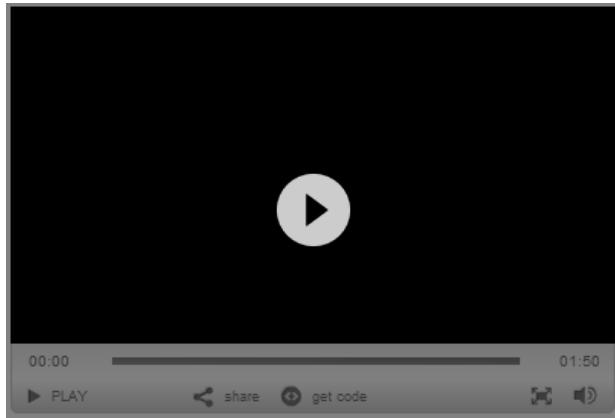


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Fairfield celebrates its diamond anniversary



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By Michael D. Pitman

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Tuesday was a special day for the city of Fairfield: it turned 60.

A special census was released on Oct. 20, 1955, which indicated the village of Fairfield's population surpassed the population minimum needed to achieve city status. And this birth of a city was conceived out of a desire for independence and survival as city officials in Hamilton pushed for annexation and expansion.

The very first line of *Fairfield at Creation*, a book written by the city's first mayor, Robert Wessel, reads: "The story of Fairfield is of a village that could not be formed, but was, and of a city that could not succeed, but has."

And it took a "long time and long hours" to get Fairfield from an idea, to a village to a city, said Bob Pendergrass, historian with the Fairfield Historical Society. Several people wanted to break away and form their own city.

Rumors had swirled in 1953 about Hamilton's desire to expand the surrounding land, but residents of the southern portion of Fairfield Twp. didn't want that to happen.

"The rumblings at that time (were) the city of Hamilton planned wide-spread annexation," said Wessel in a 2005 interview with the Journal-News. "The primary goal, as I said, was to maintain the Fairfield school system, along with that to preserve those industries that were in Fairfield Twp. so that the tax base of the school district could be maintained."

Wessel died in February 2012 at the age of 89, but his impact and legacy is still felt today, said Mayor Steve Miller. Miller, who was acting mayor during the city's 50th anniversary celebration, said Fairfield's founding fathers "were dedicated and persevered against all odds."

"One of the proudest moments, I think, during the 50th for me is when Mayor Bob Wessel got up and he said, 'You know, if the other folks were here today, they'd be proud,'" Miller said. "It made me feel so good that the first mayor felt that way, that we had upheld the legacy; we were continuing the dream that we had at the time 50, now 60, years ago."

Ohio Sen. Bill Coley, R-Liberty Twp., delivered a letter of congratulations from Gov. John Kasich and Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, and extended the good wishes from the Ohio Senate's leadership.

"It's good that we're a new enough city here in Fairfield that a lot of people here tonight were here when the city was founded," said Coley. "You've created just a wonderful city where it's a great place to live, work and raise a family."

And Wessel, as he wrote in his book, said working to create the city of Fairfield was the second of two times he had "the wonderful experience of working and associating with completely dedicated and totally committed American citizens."

"First was during my service with the 908 Field Artillery Battalion 83rd Infantry Division during World War II," he wrote. "The second was working with the people you are about to meet in the formation and establishment in the village and city of Fairfield."

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